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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002784

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI NSC ON AUGUST 24 REVIEWS READINESS OF  
SECURITY FORCES AND NINEWA BORDER POST

REF: BAGHDAD 02729

Classified By: CDA Patrica A. Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/REL MCFI) Summary: The National Security Council (I-NSC), chaired by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, focused its discussions August 24 on the readiness of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to provide security for Iraq and command and control of Ports of Entry (POEs). The council also heard the PM's brief remarks on dealing with assassinations in Baghdad and his view that MNF-I is releasing security detainees precipitously, and the Minister of State for National Security Affairs' (MSNS) assessment that violence was increasing and steps to control criminals. End Summary.

#### Assassinations and Violence Increasing

¶2. (S/REL MCFI) The PM opened the meeting with an observation that assassinations were on the rise, apparently concentrated on Muhammad al-Qasim street (a major highway in Baghdad). He suggested that the police and intelligence services must cooperate better, calling for more checkpoints, mobile patrols, and sting operations to stop or capture the assassins.

¶3. (S/REL MCFI) The PM then shifted the discussion to the question of detainees, strongly suggesting that MNF-I was not vetting those detainees it was releasing. He said that while detainee releases facilitated reconciliation, the Iraqi soldiers' morale was being undermined, citing one example of a released detainee who was caught planting an improvised explosive device.

¶4. (S/REL MCFI) MSNS Wa'eli joined in, complaining that all types of violence were on the rise and that the police and intelligence services were hamstrung by the courts. The PM noted that suspects could be detained for up to 24 hours before a warrant was necessary and told the Council that the ISF should not hesitate to arrest or detain those it suspected of bad intent. MOI Jawad al-Bulani observed that the special forces could not penetrate certain areas. The PM repeated his call for better vetting of detainees slated for release and for the intelligence and police services to work together. The PM closed this opening discussion with a call for the ISF to respond quickly to good intelligence on criminals and terrorist.

#### ISF Readiness Questioned

¶5. (S/REL MCFI) MOD Abdul Qadr began a long discussion on the readiness of the ISF with the complaint that the time allotted to him was far too short for a briefing on the readiness of different structures (personnel, logistics, life support, medical care) of the ISF. The PM and National Security Advisor (NSA) Dr. Muwaffaq Rubaie brushed aside

Abdul Qadr's complaints, insisting that Abdul Qadr give a summary rating of the readiness of ISF to provide security in Iraq.

¶6. (S/REL MCFI) Underlining his strong view that this was a rough summary of the Counter Insurgency capacity of ISF and not of its ability to defend the country from foreign invasion, MOD said that combat forces were at 70 percent of readiness, logistics support at 40 to 50 percent, maintenance at 30 to 35 percent, and medical care at only 20 to 25 percent. He also noted that the operational planning capacity of the military was sufficient at the brigade level but that larger operations required Coalition Forces (CF) support. This was even more true for logistics and medical support, he added. When pressed by the PM, he responded that the MOD can do planning for operations, does exercise effective command and control of forces, and is making progress in equipping and sustaining the military but simply does not have the capacity yet for full spectrum operations - CF support with helicopters in particular is most critical, he stated.

¶7. (S/REL MCFI) Commanding General of the Multi-National Security Transition Command in Iraq (MNSTC-I) LTG Frank Helmick supported the MOD's summary assessment, stating that while more than 100 of the Iraqi Army's (IA) 161 battalions were in the lead in security operations, logistics and sustainment of those forces still presented challenges. He noted that MNSTC-I was accelerating its efforts in those areas, adding that infrastructure challenges must also be met, for example, housing must be provided for the soldiers.

BAGHDAD 00002784 002 OF 003

#### ISF Readiness Affects SOFA

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8.(S/REL MCFI) While acknowledging the MOD's and LTG Helmick's accounts of challenges facing the ISF, the PM and the NSA insisted that the MOD say when Iraqi forces would be able to provide security for Iraq. MFA Hoshyar Zebari observed that the readiness of the ISF affected negotiations of the Status of Forces Agreement with the United States and asked when would the IA be ready to fight on its own. Repeating his qualification that he was speaking of Counter Insurgency capacity, the MOD opined that the ISF could operate on its own by the end of 2011.

#### External Threats Assessed

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¶9. (S/REL MCFI) Joint Forces Chief of Staff Babakir Shawkt broke in to say that MOD needs to prepare to face external threats, and facing those threats (Iran and Turkey were implied) would take 20 years. If U.S. forces were to leave soon, Ankara and Tehran would fill the void, he declared. NSA Rubaie commented sotto voce that there was no need to fear Turkey and Iran - they will fight each other.

#### MOI's Unbridled Confidence

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¶10. (S/REL MCFI) The PM turned to MOI Jawad al-Bulani for his assessment of when MOI security forces would be ready to assume responsibility for internal security from the IA. Bulani stated that the police are ready now - the police should have the lead security role in the ten provinces that MNF-I had returned to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) for security purposes with only a small IA presence for support if needed. (Comment: The MOD's normal poker face cracked into a skeptical smirk as he heard Bulani make this declaration. End Comment.) Joint Forces COS asked Bulani if he thought his police were ready to handle security in Baghdad (alluding to the MOI personnel who fled their posts when the ISF pushed into Sadr City in April/May). The MOD observed that in some operations the ISF needed armored units

to confront militias and terrorists, which the Iraqi Police (IP) lacked.

#### Assessment Too Important to Fudge

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¶11. (S/REL MCFI) D/PM Barham Salih underlined the importance of having an accurate assessment of IA and IP readiness, noting that major strategic decisions for Iraq depend on reliable information. He called for detailed studies of all the aspects of ISF readiness, repeating the importance of both a technical evaluation and the MOD's judgment. The PM suggested that the question to be asked is "What is possible?" The NSA added that the first step was to determine the real threats to Iraq and build a force to respond to those threats.

¶12. (S/REL MCFI) The PM abruptly terminated discussion with an observation on assassinations and the need for undercover police officers.

#### Ports of Entry

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¶13. (S/REL MCFI) D/PM (Services) Rafi Issawi briefed on measures underway to re-open the Rabiya border crossing in Ninewa province, vital to re-energizing trade from and into the province and thereby increasing economic activity. After outlining specific physical improvements to the structures needed, Issawi stressed that the real need was the creation of an administrative structure in which all personnel at the POE reported to one director. He made it clear he was speaking about all POEs, not just Rabiya. He considered the question of which agency directed the POE unimportant as long as authority over all POE personnel rests with one person, adding that the inter-agency nature of the personnel at the border post led to disunity of effort.

¶14. (S/REL MCFI) The MOI responded that the POE buildings should be relocated. Issawi suggested that the current building could be utilized while a new one was built, returning immediately to the personnel issue. In addition to a cross-agency director, he suggested that new staff would also be needed, or at least new supervisors. MOI said his people were ready to re-open Rabiya as soon as the PM directed them to do so, but added that all the staff, not just supervisors, should be replaced.

BAGHDAD 00002784 003 OF 003

¶15. (S/REL MCFI) The PM agreed with Issawi's assessment that each POE needs a single director with authority over all personnel at the port and steps should be taken to realize this. The NSA suggested that modern scanning and x-ray equipment was needed.

#### Other Projects

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¶16. (S/REL MCFI) Issawi reported that the current regular infusions of concrete to maintain the stability of the Mosul Dam were sufficient for now and that the Ministries of Agriculture and Water and Natural Resources were working on a long-term rehabilitation plan. He also reported that barriers to separate military and civilian sections of the Mosul airport were needed, but that this was a small matter easily solved.

#### Final Comments

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¶17. (S/REL MCFI) Near the close of the meeting, the MOD complained that every province seemed intent on building an airport when electricity generation, water delivery, and road building did not progress for lack of funding. He called the proliferation of airports chaotic. NSA Rubaie joked that soon everyone would be able to travel from airport to

airport, removing the need to use the unsafe roads.

¶18. (S/REL MCFI) MOD asked what are the plans for PIC in Anbar. Rubaie replied that everything was arranged and pointed out that the MOD had a representative at each meeting of the Joint Committee on the Transfer of Security Responsibility (Comment: True. End Comment.) so he had no room for complaint now that it was about to take place differently from MOD's plans.

¶19. (S/REL MCFI) Attendance Note: Commanding General MNF-I GEN David Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker did not attend this I-NSC; each was out of the country. End Note.  
BUTENIS